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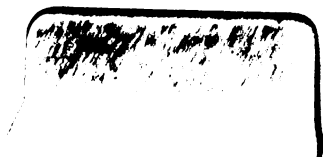
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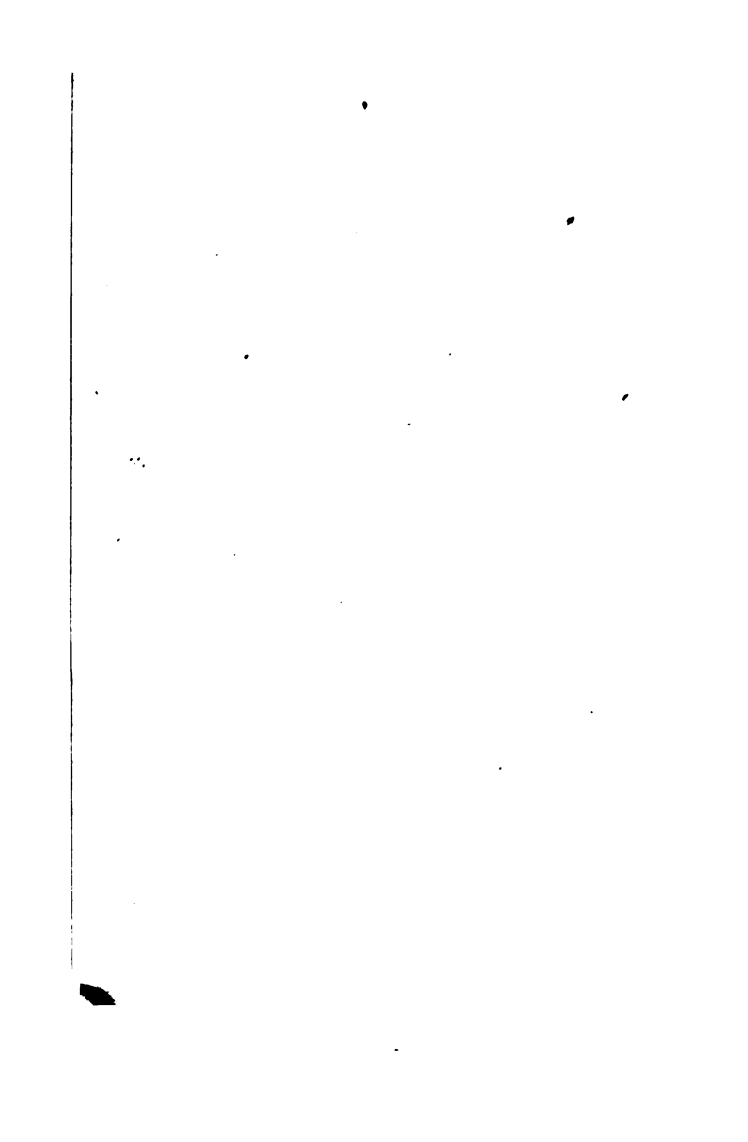




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Margaret Asbiy and Mr. Leigh.

# EXAMPLE

## BETTER THAN PRECEPT.

*Handwritten:* 1867

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*Handwritten:* 1867

"A TRAP TO CATCH A SUNBEAM,"

ETC.



LONDON:  
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.  
BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1867.

*Handwritten:* 250 t. 1635



**LONDON :**  
**SAVILL, EDWARDS AND CO., PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,**  
**COVENT GARDEN.**

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# EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PRECEPT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE COUSINS.

OH, what a muff this chap is! I can't finish this book. I hate your sanctified fellows that never do wrong. Oh, dear! I declare this weather's enough to make a fellow do I don't know what. How I do hate wet weather! Bob, what are you doing?"

"Watching the drops run down the window."

"Well, that's wise."

"Wiser than some people I could name," said another voice, gently.

The first speaker, a lad about fifteen, looked und, and asked—

"Why, mother?"

"At least he is amusing himself and troubling no one else. You are not succeeding in——"

"Either, mother, eh!" said the boy, laughing. "True, but what an awful chouse when a fellow's made up his mind to a jolly day's shooting, and this everlasting rain keeps him in with nothing really to do!"

"But grumble, Walter, and that doesn't stop the rain, does it? In what way do you think you companion is passing the day?"

"What, Bernard? Oh, at his everlasting turning lathe, or some pottering stuff of that sort."

"And does his love for 'pottering stuff of that sort,' make him one bit the less a noble, manly boy, the delight of his mother and sisters, and the ornament of his high station? Walter, you make me very sad sometimes."

"Oh! mother dear, I do not wish to do that, but how do I?"

"Because I see in you that hateful and dangerous fault common amongst boys of your age—a contempt for all that is good, and an utter indifference to any occupation which is useful."

“Why, mother, I’m sure shooting is useful.”

“In a measure, decidedly. But you seem to think it the end and object of life, or, at least, behave as though you thought so.”

“Well, but you surely would not wish me to be always muffing at home like Bob there, and be afraid to handle a gun.”

“I’m not afraid, Walter,” said the boy, angrily turning from his interesting operation of watching the drops; “how dare you say so? I should like to know when you ever saw me afraid of anything.”

“Gently, gently, boys. That’ll do—that’s not the point now in question. I do not want to see you ‘muffing’ at home always. But I do wish to see you, when you are compelled to be at home, behaving yourself like a rational individual, who has been sent into this world to make himself a useful member of society, and with some higher aim and object than shooting any number of partridges or pheasants.”

“I don’t dislike reading when I’ve got a sen-

sible book, but this is a stupid thing about a boy teaching in Sunday-schools, and all such stuff as that, and always preaching to his 'young friends about the evils of that and the other.' I hate such mawkish stuff, and I can't read it."

"I know nothing of the book you're reading, and have not the slightest wish to compel you to read it; but I cannot help contrasting and grieving over the difference between you and your cousin, which is daily forced upon me. When he is compelled to be indoors from bad weather, it is a boon to the rest of the inmates; he is the life of the place. He plays with his sisters, and reads to his mother if they wish him; and if not, he is always usefully employed himself, and his happy, bright voice and face make sunlight in his home always."

"He is a model of perfection, I daresay, which I shall never attain to."

"Walter, you forget you are speaking to your mother. You can go to your own room till I send for you."

The boy rose, and with a shrug of his shoulders lolled out of the room. The door had scarcely closed, when it was quickly opened, and a little boy about four years old ran in, carrying in his hands a copybook, on one page of which were some hieroglyphics intended to represent "A's," and rushing to his mother he exclaimed—

"Ma, dear, is these done bad now. I didded them all by my own self, and Crosby says they is bad, but Mary says they isn't, and I *know* they isn't."

A bright smile had overspread the mother's face the moment the child entered, chasing instantly the grieved and angry expression which had been there before. She laid her hand fondly on his curly head as she answered—

"Not very bad for such a little man, I think ; but I thought you were not to have any lessons while the boys were at home."

"Ah ! Crosby did promise me I was not to, but she says they've had such long holidays, and it's quite time I beginded again."



"Well, run and 'tell Crosby that mamma thinks that she must let you off till the boys go back, as that will be early next week, and you must make up for it by being such a good boy then."

"Oh! I are glad," and away ran the little fellow, so utterly regardless of Murray's laws, to triumph over his nurse with the unquestionable authority—"Mamma said I was not to do lessons."

Mrs. Neville had been some years a widow, left with these three boys to manage and educate; a difficult task, she felt, and so with true mother's devotion she gave up all her time and thoughts to this engrossing duty. The two eldest, Walter and Robert, she had sent to a public school as early as possible, and kept them in the strictest discipline at home, in terror constantly that the words of her friends would be verified, that the boys would all be spoiled now they had no father. But the little one, the baby when his father died, and in whose

soft, dark eyes she seemed to see again those that were closed for ever—the little one she could not subject to the same treatment. She could not forbid him to play, or force him to learn, or resist his earnest pleadings or his childish tears. No, she disregarded all her former strict laws, all suggestions that he would be spoiled, and when older she would never manage him, but idolized him and indulged him as much as possible. Perhaps it was difficult to help doing so, for a more affectionate, winning child never lived; even his brothers, though continually complaining of the favours shown him, could not help loving and indulging him in like manner. The little rogue, with his silky hair in tangled curls about his rosy face, his big, tender brown eyes, his coaxing ways and funny sayings—no wonder he was the pet and plaything of the house; and so, as I said, he went back in triumph to the nursery to toss away that horrid primer, and the blotted copy, and the scratched slate, and bring out drum and

trumpet and horse, and become changed at once from the half-whimpering little child, struggling with b-a ba, to the valiant soldier battling with untold foes.

And in his own room, whither his mother had sent him, stood Walter, staring out of the window at the hopeless rain, wishing he was a man and out of his mother's control—angry with her, with himself, and the weather; wishing he only knew what to do on wet days, and thinking that he should very soon dislike his cousin and give up his companionship if he was always to have him held up to him for a pattern. He hated pattern boys, they were all "muffs." And then the vision of a bold rider, taking some of the stiffest fences, the indefatigable sportsman, walking for miles unmindful of cold, wet, or fatigue, in his eager pursuit of his game, and the captain of his school eleven, made him recall those words, though uttered only to himself, and own that Bernard Leigh was no "muff."

We will see now in what manner this same

Bernard was passing the wet day which made Walter so very unhappy. In a small and very dirty cottage-room there sat a figure which might have been boy or man ; the small stature was so at variance with the old-looking careworn face, that it required a close inspection before it was possible to believe that he only numbered sixteen years, the more so from the contrast of a bright, fresh-looking boy of his own age, who, in a velvet coat and high riding boots, and silver mounted whip in his hand, stood beside him. Sixteen what different years !, Over the one they had flown so softly and swiftly that it seemed to him only as yesterday he had toddled to his mother's knee in white frocks, her darling baby-boy. Over the other they had pressed with a heavy hand, which had left its impress on that prematurely old face, imprinted lines on the forehead which should have been fair and smooth, and left behind no memory of happy baby-days.

It was a sad history—the boy had been de-

formed from his birth. His father was a poacher, a hard, bad man; and his mother a poor, wretched being, without any sense, or management, or love, or any womanly feeling, only a kind of animal love for her child which resulted in giving him his own way till he completely mastered *her*. He had heard hard, unloving words from his birth; neither seen nor knew anything which would tell him that that poor deformed body should not always be his; that there was a hope of better things hereafter. No "good tidings of great joy" had ever shone on his dreary path, or given him a glimpse of life beyond. He could neither read nor write; his parents would never pay for him to learn, and he had no wish to learn himself; so with a vacant mind and distorted body the unhappy boy had dragged through sixteen weary years of life with a kind of dense apathy and indifference for everything and everybody. The only object for and in which he showed the slightest interest *was a little* wire-haired terrier which he had

and nearly starved in a by-road. He had brought it home and fed it, and the animal, with gratitude sometimes shown more forcibly by actions than men, devoted itself to its preserver. It slept at the feet of the boy, and never left for a moment. There were many days when it felt quite unable to walk or stir from the kennel corner, and then poor Jim would go to the open door and stand in the sunshine and stare, as if asking his master to come out ; and coming back to him, stand before him wagging his tail and uttering sharp, short barks, which doubt meant " Do come, it will do you good." When he found all his exhortations useless, it would curl himself up quietly under his master's chair, and say no more on the sub-

Barnsell's father was a tenant of Lord A's. He was supposed to get his living by making osier baskets, but, alas ! his money was all so honestly earned. Many times had he—and when he was able,

Steevy too—spent the hours till daylight in the woods which skirted Lord Grayling's park, and driven home in a cart, with muffled wheels, more heavily laden by far than it had been at starting. One day Bernard Leigh, Lord Grayling's eldest son, was walking his horse along a bridle path near his own home, when the animal suddenly shied at what appeared like a bundle of old clothes by the roadside, over which a little dog appeared to be keeping watch. Wishing to teach his horse not to be afraid, Bernard led him up to it, when he discovered it to be the apparently lifeless body of a boy. He instantly dismounted, and, hastily tying his horse to a gate, went to render what assistance he could. The poor little dog kept whining and scratching and licking the face of his master, and looking with a seeming piteous entreaty in the stranger's face to do something to aid him. Bernard was at a loss what to do—the poor creature was either dead or had fainted. He was very strong for his age, and he felt sure he could carry that poor

attenuated form. He knew there was a cottage near, he could see the smoke through the trees, so he stooped, and raising the lifeless form in his arms, proceeded to the cottage, the little dog barking round him, and evincing, as far as he was able, his entire approbation of Bernard's conduct. Though the distance was short, it took some time for Bernard to reach the cottage with this dead weight in his arms, but it was gained at last, and, to Bernard's great satisfaction, he at once discovered it was the boy's own home, for a woman who was seated in the dirty room rose from her chair as he entered, and, gazing with a bewildered look in his face, exclaimed—"Oh, my boy, have they killed him?"

"I hope not," said Bernard; "I found him lying only a hundred yards from this, and brought him here for assistance. Are you his mother?"

"Oh, dear heart! yes, sir, I am. Oh, what shall we do?" and covering her face with her apron, she began to cry piteously.



“He’ll be all right presently,” said Bernard, “I daresay. Don’t cry, there’s a good soul, but help me, and undo his handkerchief and get some cold water;” and while he spoke he laid the boy down on the floor, and undid the greasy apology for a handkerchief which was tied round his throat, while the mother went for a mug of cold water. As soon as she brought it, he dashed some suddenly in the boy’s face, and was rewarded for his exertions by seeing a slight shiver run through him, and the partial opening of his eyes. “All right,” he exclaimed, joyously; “he’ll do, he’d only fainted. Now if we had but a drop of brandy, just to give him a sip, we should have him on his legs again. Have you got some? I suppose not though.”

The woman cast a half-suspicious, half-inquiring glance at him as she answered—

“I don’t know what should make you think such poor creatures as us has such things.”

“Well, no, I suppose not; that’s a bother though; however, give him some strong tea, feed

him with something, and I'll gallop home and bring him something better."

"Thank you and bless you, sir," said the woman, still sobbing and wiping her eyes with her dirty apron; "he's often took so, he's so afflicted, poor crittur, and ought to have such a deal of nourishment, which ain't possible for such as us to get him."

"Well, I'll be off home, and see about something. Look, his eyes are opening, he'll soon be all right."

And hastily leaving the cottage, Bernard mounted his horse and galloped off, going across country to reach home the quicker, and in less than an hour he was back again at the cottage with a small flask of brandy, some of which he administered to the lad, whom he found much better, sitting up in a chair. He drank the brandy, Bernard fancied, as though he was used to it, but he neither thanked him nor did any gleam of gratitude lighten up his dogged, wretched face. The woman was profuse in her

thanks, but seemed excessively anxious to get rid of him, and, while he talked to the boy, kept going constantly to the door, and looking out; so at length, finding he could be of no more use, he wished them good-bye, and promised to look in again soon.

He sauntered leisurely home this time, and as he went the image of the boy, his haggard face and filthy garments, the hopeless, apathetic manner, and his poor crippled form, seemed to fill his thoughts. What a contrast was that boy's life to his! What a mother compared to his! his dear, gentle, elegant mother! How well he remembered having an illness and thinking in his half delirious state that she was some angel always near him—her gentle, skilful touch, her low sweet voice, he felt he could never forget; and afterwards, in those delicious days of convalescence, when he lay on a sofa in his mother's room, too weak to do anything but gaze from the window at the trees and flowers and bright sunny sky it was such a treat to see

again—in those days how well he remembered all she said to him, all her loving counsel ; how she had bid him be grateful for the new life given him, the longer time to grow wiser and better, and bade him remember that the way to show his gratitude was to make that life a useful one ; and then the thought struck him, was there not now an opportunity of doing so, could he not make the joyless existence of that poor boy more endurable, had he not a little time to spare in his happy holidays, and a little money too from his handsome allowance, which might brighten that lot that seemed to him so dark compared with his ? From that moment Bernard began his good work. There were few days during those long summer holidays on which he did not see poor Steevy Barnsell. He engaged the village schoolmaster to give him an hour's instruction in reading and writing, and induced him to go to church, and bought him a new suit of clothes after his regular attendance there for some weeks, and all this without any one

knowing it but his mother, in whom he always confided, without giving up any amusement or one of his favourite pursuits, so that not even his cousin, his constant companion, knew anything occupied his time or thoughts, save occupations in which they mutually shared wet days which made Walter so miserable. Troubled Bernard's mind, he could always find himself indoors; and now this freshly-awakened interest afforded a new occupation. If the weather was too hopeless for the prospect of day's sport, he mounted his pony and proceeded to Steevy Barnsell's. A suspicion had been awakened in his mind that some troublesome poachers, about whom the gamekeeper had been talking to him, were in some way connected with Steevy's father; that he was one of the culprits. He could not be quite sure, but evidence was somewhat strong against him, and the old gamekeeper felt sure of it, and "that that is the mischief the young master took so to wade in better nor his father; but they'd best look

for he'd have 'em before long, see if he would not."

To search into this matter was Bernard's object in his visit to the cottage on the day in question. He was a little puzzled how to open the subject, as of course he felt sure the boy would deny all knowledge of the matter. He was glad to find he was alone, as he could better talk to him than when the watchful eyes of his mother were upon him, for on all his visits to the cottage he had noticed that, though she apparently occupied herself in work or household matters, she seemed to keep one eye and one ear constantly on her son and his visitor.

"What has become of your father to-day," Steevy?" asked Bernard.

"Out."

"Well, I suppose so, Steevy," said Bernard, cheerfully; "as he's not here. But I mean where is he gone?"

"Dun know. Selling osier baskets somewheres." •

"Selling osier baskets ! That must be a small living for so many of you—you, poor fellow, can't do anything to help."

The boy gave a quick glance at Bernard for an instant before he answered, and then, in a whining voice like his mother, he said—

"No, I'm a poor hobject as is too afflicted to help hisself or any one else."

"Yes, but you are learning to help yourself, Steevy, a little, now ; you are beginning to read and write. Mr. Masters tells me you get on famously. Perhaps, Steevy, you may be a schoolmaster yourself some day, for I suppose you will never be fit for hard work."

"No, sir, never, I sha'n't."

"Steevy," said Bernard, suddenly, after a short pause ; "I've got a question to ask you. We are alone now, and I think you will tell me the truth. You know my father preserves game at a great expense, and lately we have been bothered with a set of foolish fellows, who don't understand the laws, and think them hard,

coming and taking the game of a night. Now, this is very provoking, and our old game-keeper is determined to catch them. We have heard your father is a friend of theirs; is he now, Steevy? I hope, if he is, he'll just warn them off, for they'll get into trouble, I can assure you."

Steevy, completely taken by surprise at this unexpected question, seemed unable to reply, but, to Bernard's infinite astonishment, he heard a voice behind him say—

"If you only come here to be a spy and to ask a lot of questions of a poor afflicted crittur which is hardly in his senses, why we don't want you, that's all—that ain't charity."

And, turning, Bernard saw a man with an evil, forbidding face, standing before him in ragged, dirty clothes, and with a large bundle of osier baskets on his arm, which convinced Bernard it was Steevy's father he saw, and who had evidently entered silently and overheard his speech to his boy.



"I should be very sorry, Mr. Barnsell, to come here if you did not wish me, certainly. I hoped to serve your poor son; but if you'd rather I did not, I'll wish you good-day, and keep my distance for the future," answered Bernard, with a slight laugh.

But either a glance from his son or some other feeling seemed to have made him repent his speech, for he said much more civilly—

"We're glad enough to see you whenever you can call, sir, and I'm sure a little help's very acceptable. But we don't want no questions asked which might make us disagreeable to our friends and such like. I hadn't no other meaning, and ax your pardon, if I give offence."

"Never mind, my man," said Bernard, good-temperedly; "what I said to Steevy I can repeat to you. If you've friends who are foolish enough to want to get themselves into mischief, you must warn them off, that's all. So good-day."

And so saying, Bernard left the cottage fully convinced in his own mind that Barnsell was connected with the poachers, if not one of them. He determined to consult his mother as to what he should do, for it vexed him to find all his efforts for the good of the boy should be thus frustrated by the evil example always before him. With his mind full of this he rode on, unheeding the rain and wind, so occupied with his thoughts that he noticed nothing by the way, and was only roused from his reflection by the sound of the gong which announced luncheon as he entered the park. Just inside the gate he was stopped by the old gamekeeper, who, touching his hat, said—

“I beg your pardon, sir, but I want a word with you.”

“All right, Goodman, what is it?”

“Why, sir,” said the old man, coming near, laying his hand on the arched neck of the pretty animal Bernard rode, and speaking confidently, “I haven’t no sort of doubt as to the customers

what comes arter my lord's game. I knows 'em, and I'm sorry to say as how some as you teakes a deal of interest in is among 'em. They are going out ag'in to-night, as I've heard, and I mean catching them. I've found out their plans, and where they are coming to, and I'll have 'em to-night, as sure as 'eggs is eggs,' as the saying is. I suppose now you wouldn't like to come along with us, should you?"

"Yes, I should, of all things, Goodman, if my father will let me. I'll go and ask him at once, and come over to your cottage to say yes or no after lunch. On with you, Fair Star."

And with a slight touch of his whip to his horse, and a pleasant nod and smile to the old man, he cantered on to the house.

Three lovely little girls, varying in ages from twelve to four, ran out in the hall to meet him.

"You're just in time, Berny darling," exclaimed the eldest; "mamma hasn't sat down, and papa is not in. But you're all over wet, you naughty boy."

"No, little Cassie, not all over wet ; only my coat. I'll change it at once, and be with you in the twinkling of a bed-post," and patting her playfully with his whip, he went off up the broad staircase, two steps at a time, to get ready for lunch.

"Thilly Berny," lisped little Maude, as together the three little girls went into the dining-room ;  
 "a bed-post couldn't twinkle."

This caused a great laugh from her sisters, and the little woman of twelve said very patronisingly—

"You funny child, you are so matter of fact."

"I'm thure I ithn't, Lilly," answered the child, indignantly.

"You 'isn't' what, Maude ?"

"Ithn't that."

"Ah ! that is good manners, isn't it ; she doesn't know the least what matter-of-fact is."

"And what is it, Lilly ?" said Lady Grayling.

"Why, mamma, it's—it's—being—being—

Well I know myself," she said, gro  
red; "only I can't tell you."

"There, I think you must not laugh  
here, must she, puppet? Was that  
who came in, love?"

"Yes, dear mamma, he is gone to t  
wet coat off. Oh, here he comes."

"Well, my boy," said his mother as  
tered the room, "were you very wet?"

"Oh, dear, no! only got a wet jacket,  
you, dear mother," and walking up to he  
kissed her forehead as a sort of answer to  
loving smile of welcome with which she alw  
greeted him.

No wonder that the boy loved such a moth  
with a love which was almost a worship, an  
that she, above all her children, prized this one,  
who, from his earliest infancy, had never wilfully  
offended her, but whose life's aim seemed to be  
to study her smallest wish. Very beautiful  
certainly, was Lady Grayling in form and face,  
and that beauty was greatly enhanced by the

utter unconsciousness of it which she herself showed, and by the grace of her manners. She was so innately a lady, that she never, by word or deed, wounded the feelings of any one. By her servants and the poor she was worshipped, for she entered into their joys and sorrows as though they were her own, and yet with the most perfect taste and tact never forgot her own position or allowed them to forget theirs.

"Take your father's place, and carve for the children. He'll be in before we've finished, I daresay," she said.

But as she spoke the door opened, and Lord Grayling entered.

"Oh, here you are! are you wet, dear?"

"No, love," he answered, "not in the least. I've been in the houses all the morning, altering, and moving some plants. Where have you been, Bernard?"

"To Steevy's; and I'm greatly afraid Goodman's right, and that his father belongs to the poachers."

"And he too, I've no doubt. I wish you wouldn't go amongst such a set, Bernard. You can do no possible good, and it's only encouraging a set of rascals."

"Goodman's going out after the poachers to-night, father. I should like to go with him if I may," said Bernard, as a glance from his mother decided him in not replying directly to his father's questions.

"Oh! you may, as far as I'm concerned, but what will your mother say?"

"It's a rather dangerous amusement, Bernard, dear, is it not?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Lord Grayling, "I expected that would be mamma's idea."

"Goodman will take care of me, mother dear," said Bernard; "still, I won't go if you really don't wish it."

"Oh! I should be sorry to prevent you, dear boy, by any silly fears of mine, doing anything which is useful and manly; so if your father says yes, I shall certainly not say no."

"What does Bernard want to do, dear mamma?" asked Lilly.

"Catch a lot of bad men, Lilly dear, if I can, and stop them from doing worse. Oh, it will be awfully jolly if I do catch one!"

"I mean to make an example of them if they are caught, Bernard, I assure you, and I hope your *protégé* will not be among them, for your sake. But it strikes me you're grossly taken in, and I think you had much better give him up."

"Give him a little more time, love," said Lady Grayling, gently; "Rome was not built in a day; and it will be a glorious work for Bernard, if he is successful."

"Ay, my dear, 'if.'"

"Will you excuse me, mother? I've finished my luncheon, and I promised Goodman to let him know if I would come directly after lunch."

"Certainly, my boy."

"Oh, Berny!" exclaimed the little girls as he rose from the table, "you promised battledore and shuttlecock after luncheon."



"I've not forgotten. I shall be back by the time you've made that pudding disappear, and ready to beat you."

"Oh you wont beat Lilly, for she kept up two hundred times this morning," said Evelyn.

"Two hundred! pooh, that's nothing. You should see me keep up two thousand," he answered, laughing, as he left the room.

"Oh, mamma dear, ithn't that a thory of Berny?" asked little Maude, indignantly.

"He did not say he *could* do it, pet," answered her mother, "he only said 'you should see me.' When he comes back you can make him try. But if you talk you will not get through that pudding in time to play with him, so make haste."

The pudding discussed, and luncheon ended, they started off to get the battledores, and stationed themselves in the hall ready for the game. Bernard was not long gone, and soon shouts of laughter rang through the hall, proclaiming the *delight which the game afforded.*

The weather had cleared up a little, a watery sun was shining on the wet hedges and dripping trees—like a smile through tears—and at its first appearance Walter had requested permission to go out. His mother, after a rather severe lecture on his past manner of answering her, consented, and he at once set off in the direction of Lord Grayling's.

"Oh! here comes that tiresome Walter," said Evelyn, as she saw him coming up the drive; "now Berny wont be able to play any more."

"Berny will, wont 'ou Berny?" said little Maud, pleadingly.

"No, I don't think I can, now Walter's come."

"Oh, do, do, Berny."

"No, no, Maude," said Lilly, "don't let's be selfish; we've had a good game, and Berny would rather play with a companion his own age than us little girls."

"Not *rather*, old pet," said Berny, stooping to kiss the little girl's uplifted face; "but it

would be rude not to attend to Walter when he comes to see me ; and I don't think playing at battledore would amuse him."

"No, I'm sure it wouldn't, and I believe he hates little girls."

"He never has such bad taste, has he ?" said Bernard, laughing, as he opened the hall door to admit his cousin.

"What a day, isn't it !" was his first exclamation ; "enough to make a fellow hang himself."

"Not lively, certainly," said Bernard, "but I've not had any spiteful intention towards myself either."

"Oh, la ! I've been miserable all day. How do, girls ?" he said, nodding carelessly to the three children.

"How d'ye do, Walter ; how's Bob ?" asked Maude.

"In a great state of preservation, I believe, but I've hardly seen him."

"Come to my den, Walter, will you ? I've something to show you," said Bernard.

“All right.”

And together the two boys proceeded upstairs to a room, at the end of one wing of the house, which was devoted to Bernard's use.

“What do you think of my new trade, Walter? that's my wet-day occupation;” and he produced a beautiful little carved frame. “I've done that with these jolly little saws,—it's such nice work. It's my mother's birthday next week, and I'm going to give her this with a photographic group of the three girls in it. I drove them over to Betchly to have them done last week. They're splendid likenesses; that fellow does them charmingly.”

“I hate photographs,” answered Walter; “the best ones are bad, I think.”

“Oh, I don't; look here,” and taking a case from a small cabinet near, he opened it, and showed a beautiful coloured photograph of his mother.

“That's pretty good, certainly; but they're generally horrid things. And you carved this

### 34      **EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PRECEPT.**

yourself?" continued Walter, taking up the little frame; "it must be horrid fiddling work."

"Oh, no! it's capital work. I like it better than turning. I got rather tired of that."

"What's all this?" said Walter; "do you still play with these things?" and he held up a small waggon with only one wheel, the horse attached to it having only one leg.

"No, no, not exactly. I'm the family carpenter; those have come here to be mended."

"Good gracious! here's a doll without a head, and a man without an arm! Is it possible you bother yourself mending all that rubbish? I should pitch it all behind the fire."

"What, the poor little girls' treasures! you wouldn't, Walter. Besides, it's something to do."

"Well, that's a great fact, perhaps; but it's no fun to have a thing to do that's a bore. I'd rather do nothing."

"I've found something to do to-night," said Bernard; "I'm going out after the poachers."

"No! are you though? what a lark! I should like to come too."

"Well, if aunt will let you, do; you must be here quite by eleven."

"All right, I'll come if I can," said Walter.

"We shan't wait, so do as you like; Goodman says he's found a famous place to lay up, and he quite expects we shall catch 'em. Wont that be jolly."

"No mistake, if you do catch them. Mind you don't get peppered."

"I must take my chance like the rest. We're going a pretty strong party."

"By-the-bye, Bernard," said Walter, "I heard from Carteret this morning."

"Did you? I'm glad I didn't."

"Why on earth?" asked Walter.

"Because I don't like him."

"Not like him! I think he's a first-rate fellow. He's the nicest fellow in the house. Why don't you like him?"

"Because I think he's a bad style of fellow."

He may be a very merry companion, I daresay he is. I never tried him, so I can't say. But I don't like him, and to tell you the truth, I wish you did not."

"What harm is there in him?"

"I don't know about the harm, Walter, but there can't be much good in a fellow that makes a mock of everything that's right—serious, I mean. Don't you know when poor little Ned died, and the doctor preached that sermon about his death, the hardest amongst us had watery eyes—all except Carteret. I did not like him much before, but that finished it, when I saw him in the middle of the sermon put his tongue in his cheek and wink at you, and then draw a caricature of the doctor preaching in his prayer book."

Walter laughed as he answered—

"I remember that; it was a joke. But you wasn't so mighty attentive if you saw all that."

"I couldn't help it, he sat next me, and handed me the book when he'd done it; and *because* I didn't laugh you know he always *called me St. Bernard.*"

"I know he called you so, but I never knew why. I know I laughed; I couldn't help it, the likeness was irresistible."

"It was, but I don't think anything could have made me laugh then. You know I was with the poor child when he died, and that was such a sermon the doctor preached; striking enough to make the most careless and indifferent of us think. I daresay you'll think me a horrid muff, but I wrote all that sermon down that I could remember, and I know some of the sentences by heart."

Walter, who had been swinging about by its arm the headless doll during Bernard's speech, said—

"No, I don't think you a 'muff' for that; there's no accounting for taste. I don't like sermons."

"Perhaps not, Walter; but you know it all very well. I often think for a lot of us fellows together to pretend we don't care for things—to loll into church and lounge in our seats as if



## 38      EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PRECEPT.

we were at the opera, that is only another form of cowardice : in our hearts we all know that we are wrong ; we ought to be earnest and repent there at any rate, but we are all afraid of one another. We should knock a fellow down if he told us we were cowards and afraid, and yet that is quite true. I believe most of us would like to kneel instead of loll about in our seats as though the prayers were no concern of ours, but the fear stops us, the fear of ridicule, and so we button on our swell kids, button and unbutton the frock-coats, scratch initials on the book-desks, and look perpetually at our watches, that all the fellows may not see what a slow thing we think church."

"If you mean all that at me, I'm very much obliged to you," said Walter, growing very red.

"Not at all, my dear fellow, at you more than any one else. I mean it's what we've done. I know I have myself, more shame on me ; but I've thoroughly made up my mind not to do so again. A light seems to have broken in on me, and I see now how much more rep-

manly it is to be devout and reverent at proper times and places, and instead of 'following the multitude to do evil,' try to lead them to do well."

"The latter is by far the harder of the two," answered Walter.

"Well, I don't know. If two or three head boys in the school were to determine to behave properly and seriously in church, you may be sure the little ones would follow, but they are afraid and ashamed to lead."

"Ah! it's all very fine," said Walter; "I'm not fond of being peculiar. I dare say we all do much as our fathers did before us, and they don't seem much the worse. Is this your new rod?" he continued, dropping the conversation and the doll at the same moment, and taking up his cousin's fishing rod, which lay on a table near him.

"Yes; it's a very good one—I bought it when I went into Betchly last week, and yesterday captured a splendid bream with it in our

lake. I positively turned out of bed at six o'clock to catch him. I knew he was there, and when I woke and found it was dull and blowy I thought it was just the weather for him ; so off I went and caught him, and he was by far the biggest I ever saw ; I believe he weighed over ten pounds."

"Nasty things when you have caught them," said Walter.

"Oh yes, I don't care a farthing about eating them, but they're good fun to catch, they're so shy, and give one some trouble, I don't care about a thing that's too easily done."

"Ah ! I don't know about that," said Walter, yawning and stretching as though he was only just up. "I can't say I like trouble unless there's plenty of reward for it. What are you going to do till dinner ?"

"Anything you like, if you are going to stay."

"Yes, I'll stay till five. Have a game of billiards ?"

“Yes—I daresay my father will play too ; et’s go and find him ;” and together the boys proceeded to the billiard room, and the hours went by, and the daylight faded, and the wind rose a little and moaned through the trees with a sad, low sound, shaking down at each gust some of the yellow leaves, and the clouds swept wildly along the sky, taking fantastic shapes like animals, and war-chariots, all tinted with a yellowish-red hue, seeming to promise a fairer, but more windy, day on the morrow. And along the lane came groups of men home from work, some one or two carrying a sunburnt, rosy-cheeked child, who had run out to meet ‘daddy.’

In cottage rooms the fires blazed up brightly, and the little candle was set up and lighted, that “father” might see it, and quicken his weary step at the thought of home and rest.

But in one cottage there seemed no preparation for a pleasant coming home. Near the fire, which consisted of a few mouldering embers, sat

Steevy Barnsell with his dog in his lap ; his father, and two rough-looking men, were talking earnestly at one end of the room ; three guns lay on a table near, with powder-flasks, shot-belts, &c., the mother stood a little way from them, listening to them, occasionally saying in a whining voice—

“Don’t go out to-night, Jem, don’t,” to which no answer was vouchsafed.

And the hours went by, and the daylight was quite gone ; the wind still sighed and moaned through the trees, and the clouds sped swiftly on, all black, though, now night had shrouded them, and chased away the rosy tints with which the setting sun had tinted them. The lanes were all quiet, the shutters closed in the cottage windows, fires and candles out, and the weary labourers enjoying the peaceful rest their day of toil had earned. But from one cottage there issued three men and the crouching, bent figure of a boy ; they come out softly, close the door noiselessly, and walk some way

ntly down the road to where a cart stands,  
h a man holding the horse's head. A few  
ds are spoken in an under tone, and they all  
end into the cart, and it moves swiftly but  
ntly away.

## CHAPTER II.

## GOING OUT AFTER THE POACHERS.

IT was striking eleven as Bernard, Goodman, Goodman's son, and four or five stout fellows with them from the farm left the gamekeeper's house. Bernard had kissed his mother and wished her good night, and had been to the nursery and kissed the three sweet sleeping faces there—for poachers were wild desperate fellows often, and he knew not how it might turn out.

His father came to the door to see him off, and said, "Don't be rash, old fellow ; do whatever Goodman tells you," and had stood at the door long after the darkness hid his figure, listening to his footsteps till the sound died away in the distance. When he went back into the drawing-room, Lady Grayling was standing by

fire, gazing into the glowing embers. As entered she said softly—

"It's a great risk, is it not, Herbert?"

Perhaps it is, but we must not hamper him  
our anxieties; we must not forget, Lillian,  
those hands he is, let him be where he will.  
; naturally love adventures in which  
; is some amount of danger; he'll be all  
t," he added more cheerfully. "You had  
er go to bed. He'll be very late, doubtless."  
Shall you, dear?"

No, I think not."

I would rather stay, if you will let me, Herbert," said Lady Grayling, with a half smile.

Eh! very well; as you will." And so the  
er and mother sat down to wait for their

behind several large fallen trees, lying flat  
n with their guns loaded beside them, was  
Goodman, with Bernard and his own son,  
in an old tumbledown cottage, which had  
s ago been a woodcutter's dwelling, but had



long been tenantless, the rest of the men were in hiding. They had been there some time—Bernard, almost breathless with excitement, not daring to move, was beginning to think Goodman was mistaken, and that the poachers had no intention of paying them a visit that night—when a low crackling of bushes at some little distance met his ear.

“Patience,” whispered Goodman, “that may only be a rabbit or a squirrel; don’t move, for your life.”

Nearer and nearer came the sound, and then the] underwood was cautiously pushed aside, and a man slipped through. He looked about him before he moved, then came a step or two forward, and was immediately followed by four others. One by one, with slow and stealthy step, they passed the place where Bernard and Goodman were hid, and proceeded towards the usual roosting place of the pheasants. But they had gone only a few yards when Goodman and Bernard were upon them, and at a loud call

given from a whistle which young Goodman carried at his button-hole the men rushed from the hut, and soon succeeded in securing two of the poachers; but the other men seemed determined to buy their liberty even at the risk of their lives, and were fighting desperately. The man Bernard had seized had by his violent struggles managed to break away, and fired deliberately at him. Poor old Goodman rushed forward to save his master's son, but with a groan of anguish he saw him fall heavily to the ground..

The hours passed slowly at the park, and the anxious mother could neither read nor work, only glance uneasily at the time-piece, every tick of which at last seemed striking on her heart.

She tried to talk, but in vain—every subject they started was chopped up to only a few words; and there were long pauses, and sudden starts, and the oft repeated words, "How very late it is!"

And at last Lady Grayling rose and said—

“Herbert, I cannot bear this suspense, I must do something ; let us go to Goodman’s cottage and see if they know anything.”

“My dear love, how should they?”

“He may have been hurt, and carried there,” said Lady Grayling, in a trembling voice.

“My dear, why there? But still, if it will really make you any happier, come ; but remember, I told you he would be late.”

“But see how late,” said the mother, pointing to the clock, the hands of which were on the stroke of three.

“Well, come along then.”

Her garden cloak and hat were soon on, and bidding the old butler, who was also sitting up, come with them with the lantern, for it was very dark, they proceeded to Goodman’s cottage.

A light was burning in the little window, and their low tap at the door was quickly answered.

“Is it you, Goodman?” asked a voice.

“No, it is us—Lord and Lady Grayling.”

“ Oh ! dear me, my lord, my lady, what is the matter ? ”

“ May we come in, Mrs. Goodman ? ”

“ Yes, my lady, sure, come in ;—dear heart, you do look a’cold,” she said, dusting a chair with her white apron and setting it by the fire.

“ My lady is uneasy,” said Lord Grayling, “ about her boy, who is gone out poacher-hunting with Goodman. I daresay you are not uneasy, are you Mrs. Goodman ? ”

“ Well, my lord, I’m more used to sich things like them, my lady,” answered the good old body ; “ you see, my lady,” she said, turning to Lady Grayling, “ many and many’s the night I’ve sat up for my mate, ay, and the last too, when they’ve been out till daylight ; it was fidgetty work like, at first, but they never have come to no harm.”

“ And in the pursuit of their duty you hope they never will, eh, Mrs. Goodman ? ” said Lord Grayling, kindly.

“ Yes, I *hope* not, my lord ; but you see we

must all have an ending, and go when our time comes."

Lady Grayling shuddered slightly, as there seemed to ring in her ears some words she had lately heard—"Whom the gods love die young." She wished, oh how she wished she could imitate the patient resignation of that old unlearned woman; but as the image of her boy, her idolized boy, rose before her, wounded and dying, she could with difficulty restrain a hard sob of sorrow and despair.

"My lady came here," explained Lord Grayling, "half thinking her son had been wounded and was carried here instead of home, but, as I hoped, and believed, she is mistaken."

As he said this, there was a sound which even for a moment made his heart beat quicker—the regular measured tramp of men's feet, as though they carried a burden. Nearer the sound comes, and the door is thrown wide open, and Goodman and his son enter, bearing a lifeless form before them. A cry so bitter in its

agony rings through the cottage—"My boy! my boy!"

Past the men bearing that lifeless form rushed a figure and caught his mother in his arms.

"How, mother, dear mother, what is it? What has frightened you?"

Oh, the joy of that moment—her boy was there, well and unhurt, his tender, loving arms around her, and his light, fresh boy's voice making music in her heart once more. Goodman and his son, intent on the wounded form they carried, had gone on with it to the sleeping room, and laid it on a bed, and Lord Grayling, bidding Bernard take his mother home, followed to see who was the sufferer, and hear the particulars of the affray. As he entered the room he heard the elder Goodman say—

"This is a bad business, Bob: if that 'ere doctor ain't here pretty quick-sticks, as the saying is, it's all over with this chap."

"Who is he, Goodman?" asked Lord Grayling.

## 52.     EXAMPLE BETTER THAN PRECEPT.

“Why, my lord, he’s that young ’un of Barnsell’s, as Mr. Leigh is so partial to, and I will say as he lies here in that young gentleman’s place—dear heart alive, it was a terrible thing sure, and makes me quiver like all over to think on ! and I heard the shot, and I see our young gentleman go down. I’d got a man, but I let go on him and rushed up to the spot, when, to my joy, I see young master jump up and sing out, ‘ Help, Goodman, the boy’s shot ! ’ and true enough, there laid this poor chap ; he’d flung—he’d flung our young gentleman down, and taken the shot hisself—darned if I beant a’most done ! ”—and the poor old man laid his head down on the pillow and sobbed aloud—the terror and the joy had been too much for him.

“The boy’s life must be saved, if possible,” said Lord Grayling, in a low, earnest voice. “Robert, run up to the stables, rouse James, and bid him saddle the black mare, and ride for Dr. Hawthorne, and request him to be here without loss of time. I will take your place by

the boy ; let us get a little brandy down his throat if we can, Goodman. I will hold him up while you put a few drops in his mouth," and tenderly and skilfully Lord Grayling ministered to that poor squalid, dirty being, who in his eyes had now assumed so great a value—for had he not been the main instrument of saving his own dear boy ?

The doctor arrived at the moment that Bernard—who had at length persuaded his mother to go to bed—returned to the cottage, and there he requested to take his watch by his poor preserver's bed.

Early the next morning Walter arrived at the Park ; he was shown into the morning-room, where his aunt was busily at work.

" Good morning, aunt, where's Bernard ?" was his first question.

" Bernard is down at Goodman's cottage."

" Oh, is he ? shall I go to him ?"

" No, I think not, Walter—you do not know about last night, do you ?"



“No; I only know Bernard was going out after the poachers, and wanted me to come; and of course I should if it hadn't been for my mother's folly. I'm sure one would think I was made of sugar or salt and should melt, to hear her go on. She wont let me do anything like other fellows. I shall be glad to go back to school.”

“It is difficult to believe mamma in the right, is it not, Walter,” said Lady Grayling, looking up from her work with a smile.

“Of course it is, when she acts differently to anybody else, aunt. You let Bernard go.”

“I did, and I might have been very sorry for it, Walter; your mother did not care to run that risk.”

“But, aunt, is it not good for boys to go everywhere and see everything?”

“That is a very wide question, rather too much for me to answer, at least, at present. You know, my boy, all we mothers do what we think best for our children: what would be

right for one would be wrong for the other. The mother is nearly always the best judge, because she has the best instructor, love, which gives her instincts stronger even than her judgment. And though it may seem to some of us who look on, that a child might have been managed more judiciously, it is not for that child to think so, or doubt the wisdom and the love which has guarded with such zealous care his early years. I don't like sermonizing, Walter dear," said Lady Grayling, laying her beautiful white hand kindly on the boy's arm. "But I have often wished for an opportunity to tell you how mistaken I think you sometimes : you seem to think your mother—your best and truest friend, Walter—your greatest enemy simply because she opposes your inclinations, forgetting that she can have but one object, your happiness here and hereafter. How much less trouble would it be to her to let you do exactly as you liked ! How often would she then avoid those sulky looks and sharp answers which distress

her so greatly! Walter, my child, it is a sad thing to know we have caused our mothers one tear of sorrow through our own faults. I know that among all your school companions it is thought very fine to defy and oppose authority, and especially to ridicule a mother's; but, Walter, there are startling words written once on stone never to be effaced nor forgotten, which will one day cry out against us if we have not in word or deed honoured and obeyed those whom God has bid us reverence. Oh, how I wish that you boys would all learn that true manliness consists, not in a pretended disregard of authority, nor defiance of just punishment, but in a noble, honest pursuit of right in spite of ridicule."

It was very seldom that Lady Grayling spoke so seriously to her nephew, but she had noticed with much sorrow how little proper feeling seemed to subsist between mother and son; no confidence on his side, no tenderness on hers. Mrs. Neville, with her dread of spoiling, had gone to the other extreme, and finding that the

undue severity had produced an entire want of trust, and sometimes she almost feared love, in her two eldest sons, she had determined to follow the dictates of her heart with her youngest darling, and as her sister often assured her, the effects would be equally unsatisfactory. Lady Grayling knew how unpalatable "advice gratis" always was to young and old, and therefore she seldom started this unpleasant topic, with either her sister or her nephew, but she also knew that a "word in season was very good," and the opportunity being thus given her, she did not like to lose it. Walter admired his aunt excessively; her beauty of person influenced him to a certain extent, as it does most young people, and something peculiar in her voice exercised a strange power over him. In his baby days, when fits of obstinacy would seize him, and his mother would order him to his room, nothing would induce him to eat, or speak, or plead for pardon; but if his aunt came in, and only said, "Walter, my child, what is this?" it was enough—the

floodgates were opened and a shower of tears would wash away the evil temper at once, and send him penitent to his mother for pardon ; and as she spoke now with such gentle earnestness, and raised those large, tender eyes to his face, the vexation and irritation seemed to pass away, and but for shame, as in his baby days, he could have flung his arms about her neck and wept out there his sorrow and indignation. As it was he only twirled about his cane and examined his boots, and twisted his watch chain, while she spoke, and when she ceased speaking, said—

• “Aunt, my mother doesn’t understand me, that’s a fact.”

“My dear boy, don’t, pray, take up that silly notion ; that has shipwrecked the happiness of many homes. You may depend upon it people are seldom misjudged by their own home friends. Recollect what a much better opportunity they have of judging of you than any one else, and however hard their judgment may seem, depend on it, it is nearly always the right one, and

instead of despising its hardness, set to work to remedy the defects which have called it forth. And now let me tell you of the adventures of last night. Sit down ; you will stay luncheon with us, and Bernard will be in by that time."

As she slightly and graphically described the scene, the boy's clouded face cleared up, and he said—

"Oh, how I wish I'd been there! And will Steevy live, do they think?"

"The doctor hopes so; but he has always been so delicate that, of course, it is a matter of doubt. The wretched father they captured, and he will probably be transported, but of course Steevy will be spared; we could not prosecute him after his noble defence of our boy."

"The sooner he's rid of such a father the better, I should think," said Walter.

"Decidedly, but I fear the mother is very little good either. She has spoilt Steevy by allowing him his own way in everything," said Lady Grayling, with an arch smile, "and he

cares nothing for her now. I fear all Bernard's efforts for his good will be unavailing."

"Bernard's?" said Walter, inquiringly.

"Yes; did you not know Bernard has been trying to make something of him for a long time; paying the schoolmaster to teach him, and all sorts of things? He began last holidays, and it was gratitude to Bernard that made Steevy risk his life for him. Quite a little romance, is it not?"

"Yes," said Walter, thoughtfully; "I can't make it out."

"What can't you make out?" asked Lady Grayling.

But before Walter could reply the door flew open, and Bernard entered, saying in a voice of joy—

"Mother, he'll do, he'll do; isn't it jolly? Oh, Walter, how d'ye do? I didn't see you."

"Does Dr. Hawthorne think so, Bernard."

"Yes, he says he quite believes he will, with great care; but he can't be moved. The mother's

been up to see him, whining and making an awful fuss; but we got rid of her as quick as we could, for Steevy does not care anything about her. Bob is going down to sleep at his aunt's, for Steevy has his room. They are the jolliest, kindest people I ever saw, they don't mind any trouble. I declare I could hug that old woman; she's a regular brick. I'm sure she is far better to Steevy than his mother."

"Yes, she's a good old soul," said Lady Grayling, "and I think poor Steevy is in good hands. I will go and see Mavis about some good things to be sent to him in the way of jelly, &c.," and Lady Grayling left the room to give her orders.

"I say, Bernard, you never told me anything you'd done for this Steevy," said Walter, as soon as the door closed.

"Why, there was nothing," said Bernard, blushing slightly at this unexpected question.

"A great deal, I think, getting him taught,



and all that kind of thing. How came you to think of it ? ”

“ Oh, I don't know,” said Bernard, laughing ; “ a laudable wish to be a useful member of society, or make him so, or something. I say, let's go out, shall we ? I don't care a rap for luncheon. I vote we have a glass of beer and a biscuit, and go after the pheasants for an hour or two. What say you ? ”

“ All right, but I'm not in shooting trim.”

“ Well, go home and change, and I'll call for you. I can't settle to anything at home after the excitement of last night. We can walk your way first, and come home by the Betchley Woods.”

“ Very well, I'll be ready,” and Walter went on his way home full of graver thoughts than had ever yet possessed him.

• The boys were to go back to school on the following Monday, and on the Friday they had invitations to a large dance given by an uncle of Lord Grayling's, who lived at an adjoining estate.

He was a kind old man, quite a character in his way, who delighted in nothing more than giving pleasure to young people. It was quite a sight to see his face beaming with joy as he watched them dancing or entering into any amusements which he provided for them. Rich and poor alike, no matter in what station of life if they were young, they were to be amused and indulged. Many a time in the glowing summer days, when the fruit in his orchard hung in tempting clusters from the trees, he would go down to the National school, and putting his head in at the door, say to the master and mistress—"Give these chaps a holiday"—they were all chaps, boys and girls alike—"give them a holiday, and send them up to my orchard; let 'em eat till they're sick," and with a hearty laugh he would turn away, the loud cheers of the delighted children following him, and sounding to him, as he often said, like the pleasantest music. There was only one other sound in the world to compare to it, and that was the hounds in full cry. Bernard Leigh was a

great favourite of his, and he never allowed him to be at home any holidays without taking care that some amusement was provided for him at his house.

With him lived a widow lady, and her little girl. She, the mother, was as dear to him as a child. Early left an orphan on the world's charity, he had adopted and brought her up. She had married a young officer, who had died in his country's service, and left her with a small pension and one little girl. She was instantly sent for by her adopted father, whose only words as she entered the house whence she had issued so few years before a happy bride, were—

“Welcome home, my child.”

And home it had been ever since; and the little Margaret Ashley was passing a happy childhood where her mother had passed hers. She had a fair chance of being spoilt, for her grandfather, as he would have her call him, could not bear to see her punished. If her mother thought it necessary, for some childish offence, that she

should take her dinner in the nursery, grandpapa could not eat his luncheon in the dining-room. "Where's the little chap?" was the first question.

"She has not been good, and must not come own," mamma would answer.

"Oh dear, dear, then we'll wait till she is good; can't have luncheon without the little chap."

"Oh, she's good now, but it is a punishment for having been naughty."

"Oh dear, nonsense! bless me! Let bygones be bygones. You'll only keep her in mind of her naughtiness that way; better let her forget it, much better, and she wont know how to do it again. Fetch her down by all means." And so the little maid, with her red eyes, came down and hid her face on grandpapa's shoulder, and he whispered something about how sorry she made him when she was not good, that perhaps did as much, if not more, good than the intended punishment, for Margaret was a loving little soul, who

would make no one "sorry" if she could help it, much more her kind old grandfather.

Margaret was now nearly fifteen, a slight girl, with no great pretensions to beauty, but with a certain air about her which never failed to attract. She was always dressed with the most perfect taste, and had a low tender voice which seemed like the "cooing" of a dove, and gentle, graceful movements and winning ways—all better, far, than the most perfect beauty, and which won for her quite as much admiration. Add to this that the little Margaret would probably inherit the whole of Mr. Leigh's property, it is needless to say that her prospects were "not bad."

The ball to be given on this Friday was in honour of Margaret's fifteenth birthday, and Mr. — had determined that the ball should be composed of young people only, "young, merry chaps who would dance." No old and playing ladies. No mammas boring the chaps to come home long before they were tired. They

were all too young to need *chaperones*, and all that rubbish, none of them "out;" no such young ladies as these, but school girls, and school boys, and merry children. He would begin at four o'clock for the babies, and they might go home when they were sleepy, and leave room for the bigger ones to dance, till their feet ached—and so it was arranged. At four o'clock there was a magic lantern and conjuring for the youngest children; and as soon as they were gone, dancing began in real earnest. Bernard's eldest sister stayed with him for the dance, but the two youngest went home after the conjurors. Margaret Ashley looked her very best that night. Pleasure shone out of her sweet blue eyes, and lighted up her whole face. She had had so many presents; every one had been so very kind to her all day, and this was her first appearance at anything approaching to a regular dance. She was so happy. Bernard Leigh thought he had never seen her look so nice. She wore several skirts of white tarlatan over white silk, and her hair, of

which she had a great quantity, of that rare colour, chestnut brown, was coiled round her head in a thick plait, and confined behind with a plain gold comb. A beautiful bouquet of scarlet geraniums in the bosom of her dress completed her simple but very elegant toilette. After the first quadrille, which she danced with Bernard, he placed in her hand a small packet, which she ran away with to her room, eager to open. Another present, and she had so many. Was this the most valued? Perhaps so. Margaret Ashley had seen but few people in the world, but to her thinking there could not be in all the world anything or anybody so good as Bernard Leigh. Only a year or two ago she had told him so. Only a year or two ago she had kissed him tenderly at meeting and parting; but now the blush which covered her whole face, and the smile, which seemed as though her heart smiled through her eyes, only spoke his welcome; and the pale cheeks and downcast eyes only said how the little lady hated that horrid going back

to school. Now with trembling hands and flushed cheeks she opened the parcel. It was only a little simple offering—a copy of the “Christian Year” in a plain but handsome binding; but then it was so valuable because it showed he remembered her wishes. Many months ago she had said how she should like a little “Christian Year” of her own; and here it was, with her name inside, from “her affectionate Bernard Leigh.” She put it carefully away amongst her treasures, and went down to the ball-room to find him and thank him. He was dancing when she entered, and she was claimed at once herself to join the waltz, so it was some time before she could find an opportunity to speak to him, and then “thank you” was all the silly child could say; but Bernard was very well satisfied; he saw she was pleased, and that was quite enough for him; and thus they went off together, and danced again, too young and happy to care how many times they danced together, or to think of what “people would say.” But all



things in this world, however pleasant, come to an end, and so did the ball, and the flushed face of sweet Margaret Ashley lay on her pillow that night with the tired eyelids veiling the soft eyes; but they did not shut out the light of one cherished smile, for in her dreams Margaret was still dancing with Bernard Leigh.

Bernard was late up the next morning, but as soon as he had breakfasted he was down at the gamekeeper's cottage to see his patient. Steevy was much better, going on very favourably, and with every hope of recovery. He was able to talk a little, and when Bernard sat beside him he at once began to speak of the affray, and—

“You see,” he said, “when you comed and said as how the poachers had better mind, I says to myself ‘Young master’s agoing after them hisself, I shouldn’t wonder;’ and so when father come in and said he was agoing out that night, then I says to myself—‘Well, I have promised young master to try and do all as is right; still, if I go out with father,’ says I to myself, ‘may

e I may be some account to young master.' I didn't know how. I couldn't have told myself what I meant, but I seemed as though I must do, like, and so I went, and here I am," and with a sigh the poor boy sank back on his pillows.

"And I'm very grateful to you, Steevy, I can assure you," said Bernard; "and so are my father and mother. They'll never forget you, Steevy, and you'll get well, please God, and we'll do all we can for you always."

"Ah, but there ain't nothing to be done with me, you see; nor yet for me, as I sees."

"Why not, Steevy? You must not be downhearted; you're getting on famously."

"Oh, it ain't about getting well I'm thinking of; it's arterwards. What's a chap like me, as has got a father t'other side the water, to do with himself? Why, in course he's done for; he ain't no sort of good, and I don't see what's the use of getting well, or what's the use of anything."

"Well, Steevy, if some one had told you a day

or two ago that you would be the greatest possible use to me you would not have believed it, but so it is; and though there may be two or three opinions about the good you've done in saving my life," said Bernard, smiling, "my father and mother, at least, are persuaded that you did a great work there; and who knows but you may be destined to do a great many more such deeds? You know, Steevy, we are all here for something. We have all got our work set out for us, though we may not see exactly what it is."

"I don't exactly see mine, no mistake. Why, I can't do no work. I can't lift a hoe nor a spade—leastways, to use 'em. I can't,—well, there, I can't do nothing but sit on a chair by the fire, or sit in a chair in the sunshine. What I com'd for, and what I live for, I can't see."

"That we have nothing to do with, luckily, Steevy. We are here, and here we must stay, till we be sent for, and the more useful we make ourselves while we are here, the happier we shall be, I believe."

"Oh, shall us? Well, the more I hears, and the more I learns, the more puzzled I get. And I tell you what, Master Leigh, if ever I get out o' this here bed, the first thing I shall ask of you is, no more o' that there schooling."

"What, Steevy, tired of the schoolmaster?"

"Oh, bean't I," said the boy, with a heavy sigh.

Bernard laughed as he answered—

"At any rate, then, we'll forget him till you are quite well, and then, perhaps, you'll like to go to work again."

"Not I, not I; no more learning for me. Let me go on my own way. Let me be as I was before I knowed I could be any better, or felt how much there was to know, and how hard it was to know it;" and the boy turned his head away from Bernard with a gesture of impatience, as though he would neither say nor hear any more. Bernard felt it was best to say no more to him then on that subject, and so with a few more kindly words he left him, but it was with

a heavy feeling of disappointment at his heart that he walked towards home. Steevy's despairing words seemed ringing in his ears ; and, certainly, if all his efforts for this boy were thus to end, he could scarcely help feeling, too, "What was the use of anything?"

He went straight to his mother when he entered the house, for he took to her all his troubles. She was in the morning room, her own "snuggery," as she called it, into which he was of course privileged to enter, and flinging himself down on the sofa beside her, he began at once his story. She listened patiently to it all, and then, with that sweet tender smile which always seemed to soothe any irritation he felt, she said—

"My boy, this is only what I expected. If people were so easily turned from bad to good, what a far pleasanter and lighter duty would our clergy have ! If a few wise words, a little good instruction, a little kindness shown could

eradicate the evils of a life badly begun, and evil habits contracted from birth, the task of bringing lost sheep back to the fold would be light indeed. Though your father's words at luncheon the other day sounded discouraging, they were founded on experience. He knew how rare it is to find any *real* reformation. There may be better outward conduct for the sake of gain, which too often misleads well-meaning persons, and they flatter themselves the erring one is reclaimed, when, alas! the evil is only veiled, not eradicated. But that is no reason why we should not try, each of us, to do our part in bringing back the stray sheep, even if we fail in accomplishing our object; at least we shall have the satisfaction of knowing 'we have done what we could.' "

"Then do you think, mother, when Steevy gets well he will go back to all his old bad ways?"

"In all probability he will."

"Then I've only been wasting my time and money," said Bernard, rather pettishly.

"Not at all, my boy, you have been doing good for yourself if not for him. You are making a mistake so common amongst us all—expecting to see the fruit of your work, to reap your reward here. That you must not do. You must work for a right motive, looking for nothing again. He who plants the acorn does not see the giant oak. You must plant and water, leaving the increase in other hands. It may be, the mercies you send will come back in blessings on yourself."

"Then what do you advise me to do about Steevy?"

"Leave him alone till he is quite well of his wounds; he will perhaps think differently then, and if he will not be taught any more, at least we can perhaps keep him to church, where he will hear good words, if he cannot read them, and in the meanwhile we must keep hoping.

We will not give him up entirely, and perseverance is always successful in the end, at least to a certain extent. I shall go and see him when you're away."

"Thank you, dear mother, I was going to ask you that."

"You may depend he will not be deserted," and Lady Grayling bent down and kissed his forehead lovingly, thinking but for that poor wretched boy what sorrow would have been in that house.

"Mamma, may we come in?" said a light voice outside, and before permission could well be granted, the door opened, and Evelyn entered leading by the hand Margaret Ashley.

"Mamma, dear, isn't she to stay all day? Do say yes. I know she would like to, wouldn't you, Meggie?"

With a blush and a smile, Margaret extended her hand to Lady Grayling and Bernard, but made no answer to Evelyn's question.



"Stay by all means, love, if you will," said Lady Grayling. "Are you alone?"

"Yes, excepting Guess, he is with me."

"Guess can stay, do, darling old doggie, and he shall have all my bones at dinner," said Evelyn.

"What an awful promise, Evy!" said her brother, laughing.

"My *meat* bones, I mean, of course, you goose of a brother. Now come, Meggie, and take your things off, and we'll have a nice chat about last night. Oh, wasn't it lovely! I did like it so!"

"Don't keep Margaret a month up there," said Bernard, as the two girls left the room. "How she grows, mother, does she not?"

"Yes, she will be tall, I think; not pretty, but very engaging. One more word with you, dear child, before you go. I've a little present for you," and Lady Grayling opened a drawer of her writing table, and placed in his hands a

small book. "You will remember this is a gift from your mother, and use it often for her sake. I know the trials and temptations of a school life, but try and bear up against them; this will help you to do so. I thought I might not get so good an opportunity of speaking to you, and I should like you to use this little book to-morrow."

Bernard kissed his mother silently, and carried up to his own room the beautifully-bound Eucharistica, with a solemn resolve to cherish it as her gift, and constantly use it, whatever opposition he might meet with.

After luncheon, Bernard volunteered to walk over and acquaint his uncle that Margaret was going to remain to dinner, and ask for the carriage to fetch her at night, and then on to his cousin to fetch him home to dinner also. And so a merry evening they all had, chatting over the ball and playing at a variety of games, until the carriage came to fetch Margaret away; then the colour mounted to her face,

and the little hands trembled, and she had but little voice left to say "good bye," for she knew to one of the party it was "good bye" for a long time—three months—an eternity to that loving little heart; but it was murmured somehow, and her maid, who had come in the carriage for her, had wrapped her up in a cloak and she was whirling away home before she could recover herself or manage to speak in a strictly natural voice. Bernard had put her into the carriage and watched it away, and gone back into the drawing-room, but it was some time before he entered into conversation with the rest of the family. His attention was at length roused by Walter, who came and seated himself beside him, and in a low voice said—

"I suppose that fellow Steevy hasn't more money than he knows what to do with. Will you give him this?" and he pushed some money into his cousin's hand.

"Thank you, Walter, I'm sure he'll be very

grateful ; at least he ought to be. But why not take it him yourself ?”

“ Oh, no ; I don’t want to be seen humbugging about there. You give it him.”

“ Well, I may tell him it’s from you ?”

“ If you like, for I’m sure he doesn’t know who I am. But I thought perhaps it was a pleasant feeling to be useful, for you always seem so happy, that I’d try what I could do. Well, I must go now. Ten o’clock at the station, Monday, if I don’t see you before.”

“ Yes, all right. Mother, Walter’s going.”

Lady Grayling rose and shook hands warmly with her nephew, saying in an under tone, “ God bless you, Walter ; be a good brave boy, and don’t forget your mother and her love for you.”

Monday came, and the little girls bid a tearful farewell to their darling brother, with many a reiterated promise to take the greatest care of Steevy, and write and tell him how he was ; and through the tears which glistened in her eyes,

though she would not let them fall, his mother had watched the carriage bear him out of sight, and gone back to her occupations, feeling how uninteresting they all were, and what a blank the absence of that dearly-loved face and form had left in her home. But time, which seems so long to look forward to, passes only too happily, and the dark December days soon came with their long evenings, and their cold dreary winds, and the little girls were counting the days for Bernard's return. Steevy was well of his wound, and had gone home to his cottage. His mother had been most kindly assisted by Lady Grayling, and many of the ladies in the neighbourhood, but still remained the same dirty, miserable, whining woman. Lord Grayling allowed Steevy, in consideration of his service to his son, a small sum weekly, sufficient to support him ; and the mother went out charing, and took any odd job she could get. Margaret Ashley was among the most frequent visitors to the cottage. Steevy had a comforter and muffetees

worked by her against the cold weather, an arm-chair, a Bible, all gifts brought him at different times by Margaret Ashley. But notwithstanding all the attentions shown him, Steevy remained much the same dogged currish being as before Bernard first became acquainted with him.

## CHAPTER III.

## WALTER'S CONVICTIONS.

It is a bright, cold, frosty morning, the day on which Bernard is expected home, and the three little girls will keep running to the window to watch for him, though they have been assured he will not be home much before their tea-time. They talk of nothing else but what they have got to show him, and what he will have to offer them. Maud has such a nice doll, and it has been dressed since daybreak in its very best to see Bernard ; Evelyn can play a familiar waltz of his, and is longing he shall hear it ; and Lilly has worked a pair of slippers and put them in his room, and is so anxious for him to see them, and guess who made them. And so they *talk*, and watch, and cannot eat their dinners,

and cannot settle to any amusement; and the daylight fades, and the nursery tea is being got ready, and Maud, with tears in her eyes, says it will soon be time for "her dolly to go to bed," and still he doesn't come. Hark! Wheels now. Down they all rush. "It is the carriage gone for Mr. Leigh," explains the butler; so back they go again, Maude to persuade dolly to keep awake a little longer; and dear old nurse, who is very kind, and as anxious to see dear young master as his sisters, tries to amuse them with a new game, and they manage thus to pass the time till again there is a sound of wheels. It must be him this time, and away they all fly down the broad staircase, across the hall, the glass doors of which are just being thrown open by the servant to admit—not Bernard. The carriage is empty, and the coachman gives in a small note instead, and the door is shut, and the empty carriage goes slowly back to the stables, and the little girls crowd



round mamma with anxious faces to know what is the matter.

The note ran thus—

“DEAREST MOTHER,—I have brought Walter home very ill. I do not like to leave him or my aunt, who is, of course dreadfully distressed. I’ll come over early in the morning to see you all. Inflammation is poor Walter’s malady—nothing ‘catching,’ so don’t be uneasy, darling mother, about

“Your loving son.”

“Oh, dear darling Berny! I are sorry,” said little Maud, with a strong inclination to cry.

“Poor Walter, too,” said Lady Grayling, “Run and find papa, Lilly dear. I must talk to him about this. I think I ought to go myself to poor Cecilia. She will be distracted about Walter.”

Lilly ran off to find her father, and eagerly *communicated* her intelligence, and enlarged on

their disappointment at the non-arrival of Bernard as they walked together to the drawing-room. After discussing the matter for some little time, Lord Grayling decided that as Bernard was already there, it would be better for Lady Grayling not to go that evening, but to send up a servant to say that she was ready to come if required, and to know if they could render any possible service.

It was indeed a sad return home for Walter. He was carried to his bed at once in excruciating pain, and the nearest physician sent for, who shook his head very ominously, and said his journey home had been most imprudent. Bernard had thought so too, for Walter had been ailing for some days, and on the morning he was to return was decidedly worse. His tutor begged him to remain, and Bernard offered to remain with him, but he would hear of nothing of the sort, and seemed only anxious to get away as soon as possible. Each mile of the journey he seemed to grow worse, greatly to Bernard's

distress and anxiety; and the alarm his state on arriving at home caused his mother decided Bernard on remaining all night, and making himself as useful to his aunt as he could, and he was a great comfort to her. His gentleness and patience with Walter, his quiet attentions to his aunt, and his thoughtfulness for all, were most invaluable, and increased more than ever his aunt's high opinion of him.

Lady Grayling arrived early in the morning, having sent word that she would do so, and that Bernard had better not leave till she came. She found Walter very ill, and thought so badly of him, that she scarcely knew how to speak cheerfully to his mother.

"If your aunt can spare you a little while, Bernard dear," she said, "you had better, I think, go home and just see your sisters, who are dying to see you. The carriage that brought me can take you; and if poor Walter wishes you to return, you can ride Fair Star back, and keep her here."

“Oh yes, come back by all means, dear Bernard,” said Mrs. Neville; “I don’t know what I should do without him.”

And so, while his mother took his place by the sick bed, Bernard went home. His sisters devoured him nearly with kisses, and were sadly distressed to hear he was going back again; but he stayed to hear the waltz and see the doll and the slippers, and to guess that they were made by old Betty at the lodge, and by nurse, and by Maude, and by everybody of course but the right person. And then little Maude told him triumphantly it was dear clever Lilly, and she was duly kissed and commended. And then he ran to the stables and saw the horses and the dogs, and was obliged to stay, at the old gardener’s request, to look in the house at some “terrible fine plants, sure,” that had come in his absence, and say a word or two to Goodman, sending by him a message to Steevy, followed everywhere by his sisters, who would not leave him for a moment; and then he and Fair Star

were off back again from his bright home, where so much of pleasant occupation awaited him, to the dark room and the fretful invalid.

Walter grew worse ; for days he lay between life and death, and the poor mother with tears besought Bernard to stay with her. Lady Grayling came daily, and much as she longed to have her boy home, and feared that the anxiety and confinement to the house, which he was so unused to, would make him ill, still she could not find it in her heart to take him away from the poor widowed, anxious mother.

The doctor came four or five times a day, leaving always with that old cry which has struck terror to so many hearts—"If his strength will only bear up, he will do." "If," and each day he seemed weaker.

One afternoon he had been sleeping some hours, and Mrs. Neville had begged Bernard to take that opportunity to get a good ride, as in his waking moments he could not bear Bernard away from him. While he was gone

he awoke, and as usual his first word was "Bernard."

"I am here, love. Bernard will be here directly," said his mother.

"Oh! I want him so much. I want to talk to him before I go."

"He will be here very soon. But you are better, dear, you have had such a long sleep."

"Am I, dear mother? I hope so, for your sake."

And then he lay still, and said no more till the door softly opening roused him, and again he said—"Bernard."

"Yes, old fellow, here I am; been asleep a long while, haven't you?"

"Yes, a long while."

"That's the best thing you can do, except eat and drink, and when you're not doing one you must do the other. I'm ready to prop you up while aunt feeds you. Come along, aunt."

"But I want to talk to you."

"Not till you've eaten. I'm master here now,

you know. When you get well you shall pitch into me."

He always eats for Bernard, however unwilling he felt to do so, and after he had recovered the exertion, and lain still for some while as Bernard bid him, he beckoned him to the bedside, and asked him to listen to him.

"Bernard," he said, "all the time I have lain ill here, I have had something on my mind. I feel able now to tell you about it. I know the doctor and you all think I shan't get well, and I wish you to hear it before—before——"

"Go on, Walter and tell me anything you like; but first let me tell you that I am sure that long refreshing sleep has been a great thing for you, and when the doctor comes I know he will say you're ever so much better."

Walter shook his head.

"However," continued Bernard, "go on; I'm ready to listen, only don't tire yourself."

"I haven't much to say, only to ask your *forgiveness* for the way I've helped the boys to

laugh at you at school. I told Cartaret about Steevy, and that's why they called you parson and saint ; but you never seemed to mind it, or I should not have done it ; it was only for a silly joke."

"I did *not* mind it in the least, I assure you. Why, a fellow must be thin skinned to mind schoolboy chaff. As the man said when his wife beat him, you know, 'it amused them, and it did not hurt me.' If that's all, old fellow, make your mind quite easy."

"It is not quite all I would say. I want to tell you how right I think you now, and how wrong I think myself. Since I have lain here so near death I have wished, oh ! Bernard, so bitterly, I could recall those wretched Sundays at school. When I remember the jokes I have laughed at and helped to make on serious things, when I think of my folly at church, it makes me shudder, for I know there is a text which tells we shall give account for every idle word, and how near, how frightfully



near, have I been, and still am to that account, Bernard."

"When we are ill we are sure to think of all we have done wrong, Walter," said Bernard, gently; "it is good for us to do so; perhaps that is why illness is sometimes sent us; but I hope we shall see you about amongst us again, and you and I, with this warning before us, that even in our young days we may be summoned, will try more earnestly to be ready. Now you really must not talk one word more. Ah! here is the doctor."

Greatly to Bernard's delight, Dr. Hawthorne pronounced Walter decidedly better; he said a change had taken place, and he hoped he might say that, with great care, there was every prospect of his recovering.

And each day a little steady progress was made, and before another week was ended Walter was carried down on to the sofa, enjoying the exquisite sensation of renewed health after

dangerous illness. Bernard was again at home, to the intense delight of his sisters, and of a certain little shy maiden who expressed her satisfaction by beaming looks of content, not by the vehement huggings, which threatened nearly to annihilate him, which he every minute or two received from his sisters.

It wanted but a week to Christmas-day, and they were all busily employed making decorations for the church, in the schoolroom, which had been cleared of books, desks, and maps, &c., for the purpose. Lady Grayling, Margaret Ashley, Bernard, Lilly, and Evelyn were all at work, and little Maude kept bobbing about amongst the green, pricking herself with the holly and getting in everybody's way, under the happy delusion that she was helping them. What a merry party they were—how they laughed and chattered—and how the firelight chattered and seemed to laugh as one flame chased another up the chimney, and how charmed Maude was when

Bernard threw some holly into the fire to watch the leaves burn and see how beautiful they looked—and how charmed Bernard was to help sweet Margaret Ashley to the wreaths, and how very white he thought the little fingers looked against the dark leaves of the holly—and then the shouts of laughter when the sly boy produced a sprig of mistletoe from his pocket, and holding it over the little glossy head which was bent down at her work, gave Margaret such a kiss, and then proceeded to pay the same compliment to old nurse too, who had just entered to fetch the little girls to tea! And reluctantly they went, for they thought it was much better fun downstairs; but the wreath making proceeded rather better perhaps when they were gone, though it's true there was a little blushing and a little whispering over the wreaths Bernard was helping Margaret to make.

And Christmas-day came with a bright, clear, frosty morning, the sun gleaming on the crisp

ground and on the leafless trees—shining on the hoar-frost, till each small branch seemed studded with diamonds—the beautiful old church gay with its decorations, and the merry pealing of the bells, and the brightness of the weather, seemed all in accordance with the Church's great festival. Bernard had been several times to see Steevy since his return from his cousin's, but he saw nothing to make him very hopeful of a great change for the better in him; he would not hear of a return of the schoolmaster's visits—still, he would now read a little; and once or twice Bernard had had the gratification of seeing him reading the Bible Margaret gave him. On Christmas-eve he had gone again to see him, and take him a Christmas present. He was seated in his old place in the corner, with his dog on his knee, when Bernard entered.

“I'm glad you are come,” he said. “I wanted to tell you we're a-going.”

“Going, Steevy! where to?”

“ Out to Australia. She wont be happy here, and she fancies if we get out to those parts, we should do better ; and it ain’t no odds to me where I be ; so we’re a going. She’s managed it somehow, I don’t know how—but we’re a going—the first of the month, that’s all I know. There,” he said, producing a piece of paper, “ is the list of things we’re obliged to take. I believe she is out a begging now of one and t’other to get the things together.”

“ Well, Steevy, if you’re bent on going, this little Christmas box I have brought you will just assist you in getting what you want.”

“ Thank you—mother says we shall get on better there, where no one knows anything on us ; now, we’ve nothing to do, and a bad name’ too.”

“ Well, perhaps she’s right. In another land I hope you will all begin a better life.”

“ Ha, ha !—who knows—get rich, eh ?”

Poor Steevy ! his idea of a better life was

different to Bernard's, but Bernard felt how little good it was to say more to him; he only gave him his money, and told him he would see him again before he left, and hoped he was coming to church on Christmas morning.

"The last Christmas in your own church, Steevy, for many a long year, perhaps for ever."

Steevy murmured some reply which Bernard did not hear, but he saw him in his place at church that lovely Christmas-day.

Walter, though much better, was not permitted to be out, and so the Nevilles did not, as usual, join the party at the Park; but Mr. Leigh, and Mrs. Ashley, and Margaret were there, and a bright and happy day they passed. And that Christmas passed away and those happy holidays; and the boys went back to school, and the little girls resumed their studies; and Steevy and his mother sailed for Australia—Bernard's words to Steevy seemed like a prophecy—the ship in which they sailed, with its heavy freight of

human souls, went down with all hands, so that it *was* the last time Steevy Barnsell had entered his parish church on Christmas morn. Perhaps it was better so—perhaps, why do we say perhaps when we know that “whatever is, is right,” and that not a sparrow falls to the ground unheeded, nor even the tiniest insect ends its short-timed existence till its work here is finished ?

Summer is come again, and Walter and Bernard are again home, and this time return no more to school. Walter has taken a fancy to be a doctor, has grown grave and steady, and his mother cannot complain now that he has no indoor occupation, for he is continually trying to blow up the house with chemical experiments. Bernard is going abroad with a travelling tutor, greatly to “somebody’s” sorrow.

Bob is going back to school alone, and Herbert is being spoiled at home and growing disagreeable.

And so the years roll on, and Mr. Leigh dies, and Margaret Ashley finds herself an heiress, and visitors at the Park, knowing this too, are very civil to Margaret, and penniless younger sons, and poor curates, and even Walter Neville, pay their court to her; but Margaret takes no notice of any of them: the little heart is true to its first idol, and she still thinks there never was, nor ever can be, any one so good as Bernard Leigh.

I believe there are some persons who feel sad at that sound which to others seems so joyous—a peal of bells. Still even such do not object to their ringing on proper occasions, and certainly every one in the neighbourhood of Lord Grayling's park liked to hear them one sunny June morning when they rang a hearty peal in honour of the marriage of the Honourable Bernard Leigh and Miss Ashley.

“God bless them! I allays said they was made for each other,” said old Mrs. Goodman, wiping



er cheeks, down which ran tears of joy as she turned back into her cottage after watching the carriage out of sight; and "God bless them," said Walter Neville. "I wouldn't have borne to see any one else marry her; but he deserves her. He has convinced me that a fellow can be all that is good, without being the least of a muff."

THE END.

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